WORD-EATER

NO. 7

Shellie Rae Smith

WORDEATER 78 STAFF: DONNA AIELLO, STEVE CUSTER, JEFF HICKS, JENNIFER JAY, JAMIE NOVOTNY, JOHN STOBART- FOUR OF THE ABOVE HAD TO APPROVE A SELECTION.

AWARDS

POETRY AWARDS;

Maria Mellinger $5.00
Jennifer Jay $5.00
Shelly Partillo $5.00
Matt Jones $5.00
Gerald Scott $5.00
Dave Tieman $5.00

FICTION AWARDS;

Maria Mellinger $5.00
Michelle Forys $5.00

COVER DESIGN

Shellie Smith $20.00

Next Deadlines:

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David Tieman

Oil tanker cowboy
Riding a wild horse
Chewing polluted tobacco
And spitting
Into the ocean's spittoon

*****

David Tieman

Each night
I gape,
Cross-eyed,
At the tinfoil water
That broken-hearted stars created
To preserve vivid memories
Of a tickling love affair
With an amatory annoyance
That refused to laugh

*****

Lauri Stahl

Just fifteen short years ago
I thanked you God with tearful eyes
As I gave birth to a beautiful son, and
A sense of greatness I did recognize.

So sure was I that the future held
Periods of peacefulness and grandeur.
I'm glad I didn't know your plan contained
Challenges and tests of Cancer.

To sit on the sidelines watching and waiting
Wishing you were the one is extremely hard.
But for some unknown reason God chose my son,
And God dealt him the trump card.

So I firmly took
My place in this play
As I stood by his side
Every step of the way.

Thru chemo, vomit, surgery, and pain
I dug down deep inside myself
searching for forgotten knowledge
Hoping to give my son some help.

Concentrating on life and laughter
As cycles of darkness did appear,
Helped us as we went forward,
Holding hands, without fear.

Don't try to reason the how or why
Of struggles, sorrows, and strife.
All you need to really know is-they
Also bring blessings into your life.

Donica Rampa

Warrior Heart

Warriors Heartbeat
Tom-Tom drum
'Round blazing flames
of rising son

Upon Howling Wind
in drenching rain
Heartbeat coursing
Through primal vein

Medicine Man
Heal my wounds
In dancing light
of a hundred moons

Foot beats faster
rise and fall
These Ancient Spirits
See them all

Blood of earth
Mind of sky
Eagle teach me
How to fly

Politics and the Kool-aid Man

*****

Shelly Partilla

I suppose I've bolted through
All avenues of maturity.
I'm considering testing
You're patience a little more
To make this a little easier.
I've spent a majority of the week
Trying to find a way
To make you hate me
And I haven't come up with
Any terrific, devious schemes yet.
If I could just tell you
How I really feel
In the words I really want to use
Without you being offended,
It would be over by now.
Although it sounds crass and horribly callous,
I really have no use for you anymore.
I'm really very sorry
But from far away, you were so appealing
And you seemed like such a great catch.
But up close, you're really not that exciting.

*****

Primary Deviance

Martin Niezmanski

There are no glasses
To help me see the world,
It is everyone else that
Needs to adjust their eyes.

*****

Carolyn and the Dragon

Maria Mellinger

Carolyn always claimed to be friends with a green monster. Apparently, he ate trains of obnoxious people and developed indigestion all too frequently. She approved of such behavior, even though she was a vegetarian.

We talked about the monster often. I was unsure of his actual existence, just as all the people and things on Sesame Street never saw Snuffeluppagus, except Big Bird. Carolyn could very well have been the Big Bird of my circle of friends. I tried bery hard not to be obnoxious or to take trains.

I thought we were friends. Almost by accident, however, I met new people, and these new people went to the city on Thursdays. I'd never gone anywhere on a Thursday before.

With great fear and excitement I boarded the train that dreadful day before Friday. The new people and I had such fun being loud and laughing, eating red meat. We dance through the city like dragons, burning down skyscrapers with our stories, stealing damsels from the five and dime.

On the ride home a fearful smog wrapped the train like a birthday present with a lightening bow. The clack clack of the rails was replaced by the chomp chomp chomp of teeth approaching our cocktail car.

I hadn't a clue I had been obnoxious, and perhaps that's how I was saved. But I had glimpsed the green monster, and I would never see Carolyn again.

*****

Flowers on Mondays

Shelly Partilla

It's amateur night
In his bedroom.
The midnight sun
Peeks around corners of darkness
and I wonder what I'm doing here.
His dusty cologne sickens me
And I strain my nose
For a hint of less-stale air.
Imagining ten-foot poles
That aren't long enough,
I touch his clammy skin
And pretend he's someone else--
someone less vulgar
And far more aesthetic.
His lips taste like onions and mouthwash
And awkward apologies for pulling my hair
Fly up from arctic sheets.
"I love you", he says.
And counting the hours I've known him
And how much I love my dog,
I turn to him and say--
"I love you too."
But I'm lying
And I really just want to get this over with.

*****

Strangers

Janine Passehl

you are no stranger to me
though we've never even met.
we've spent countless hours
in one anothers presence,
exchanging silent words and conversations
with our eyes.
you pass by
and i scream
"i love you!"

you continue to walk on.

I thought I heard you scream

*****

Martin Nieznanski

I thought I heard you screaming
so I ran as fast as I could
To you...
When I got there I realized that
You were enjoying yourself with
Someone who must be better than me,
And the screams were laughter

*****

XII

Gerald R. Scott

Alone I stand, my following gone,
God & Idols of old replaced by those of new
Should I believe that's the way life is?
Even for a God?
Should I grasp on th that existential thought?
Dionysus left me weeks ago to dance & sing & drink in the mountains
I was loved once
Once
My following great once
Now it seems that beautiful Apollo has taken my followers
These children would never follow Ares
But he looks like Ares
With my following gone, will I die or just become a myth?
As I look back I have to question my followers & the gods I chose to befriend
Was it wise?
The followers seem too manipulated or too easily molded now
Was I doing that too?
My followers were of beautiful women & sturdy men
Or so I thought!
They seem no more than blasphemous malignant parasites now.
The things I loathe most
Was it wise?
I cannot wait for Dionysus to return!
Perhaps he will set right or at least see what I haven't
Oh, save me mighty thunder thrower!
Save me from Apollo & his bright eyes!
How I enjoy his company though
I truly do
But I loathe the followers he's stolen
He fools them with mystic logic & platinum tongue
Apollo has chased the satyr from the woods & made the satyr only an aquaintenance of mine now
The satyr was a good friend once
Once
But what of poor Dionysus?
He's fallen in-love-with a soccobus that does not but try to change him & sway his will
Dionysus & I often traveled to the North lands to revel & drink
Now it seems even he is loosing his passion
Why Dionysus?
Why!?!
Why has the dryad left my life?
The dryad chose confusion & a mortal over a well toned blond god
Possibly the time for gods of mysticism & passion is over
What a loss for mankind!
Or maybe it's a loss for godkind?
That rarity I'm part of is being pushed away
Will there be no true "wild children" anymore?
I loved those children
That was before they became asphyxiated by Apollo's glance
The vyino for aristocrasy of the gods is a rare thing
A strange thing!
I would never usurp Apollo's influences
That's out of my relm of rulership or compassion
Maybe it's sympathy that holds me from my followers of old?
Sympathy not only for them but myself too
Perhaps I should be gone from these hills & valleys?
Should I seek new followers?
Should they seek me out instead?
I nearly died once already
A god dying is not a welcomed sight in any ports
I'm torn between the security of the woods & the edge of the cliff that stimulates my passions
Apollo, my friend, has inhabited the woods
Though not willingly, he pushed me towards the cliff
The cliff is far from the woods
Perhaps it's not as bad as this raving god says?
Perhaps I just need to sleep & be dormant for awhile & my following will return or be anew?
Perhaps?
Perhaps I'm not a god at all?
Perhaps I was chosen to be one & now discarded as a used one!?
Perhaps there are no gods?
If there are gods though, how could I stand not being one?!

*****

Demon's Bliss

Dawn Mooney

So the devil called me out to play
To sing and dance
And scream at Heaven
With he as my partner
Until I die

I played his game
I laughed at pain
I leaped with orgasmic pleasure
And when the angels called me back
I told them I'd be gone forever

This evil fun wouldn't last
The told me
To which I replied,
"Nothing good ever does"
And with demon's bliss
I turned away
Back into
The hell of happiness
To enjoy the laughter
Until I die.

St. Vincent De Paul's

Maria Mellinger

There are things my love for you force me to ignore-
The kiss of an eyelash on a wind carrying a wish,
The gypsy homes I visited to buy crystal
wrapped in someone's slip,
Pretty paisley panties worn under my worldly attire,
Sleepless nights with poetry, writing letters,
feeding my journal with thoughts.

I sold these things to a thrift store filled with sacrifices,
Where I saw my mother's high school job on wholesale,
Bridesmaids in the irregular rack, best friends on discount,
And the many objects, accumulations, and relation we acquire
Before replacing them with the lover and his luggage.

With leftover pennies from your purchase I bought large overalls
With many pockets for secrets and a patch of yin and yang.
I stuffed mysteries behind the material and fastened the buckles,
Shoplifted gossip and an evening a week for my friends.
I wore the heavy denims whenever what I was supposed to ignore

Forgot to be forgotten and what I forgot for.

*****

With

Matt Jones

With.
Whatta word, Whatta word!
With me.
With you
With me
We are with
In the skin
under glass
In the SIN
(I've got you under my skin)
For your pound of Flesh
Let's begin.
Ripples of the skein
Yours and mine
Locked at Heaven's Door
Opening the Gate of Hell
Demonstrate
Negotiate
Dominate
In my blood
Both over, both over
Run red to the shores
Down through the
Darkness
That tunnel of love
Architecture of
Cannibals
Eating, chewing
Smack your lips
In the serpent's coil
Running around
That sea-blue marble
Down and through
The spine of night
Where we all
Just might
Close to you
In that
Dragon-time
Feel my breath
We are with
Ripple our scales
Flutter our wings
Tonight
We consume everything.
I taste the salt
of a deadened sea
Ripe red pastures
In the above
Through the cracks
I see your pulse
your flesh
your sweat
your heat
your holy trinity
kept in amber
Go into the dark
Deeper, Faster
Now
Arrows of Fate
May find their mark
Quiver, shudder
We pace as one
Into that
Vertigo heat
Around with me twist
In the bog
Sinking down
Drowning now
Bite, scratch, hiss
About, About, Reel and rout
Private Dance
of private penance

(continued)

May I cut in?
No, it's a sin
Dance to the beat
of the sweltering heat
Idolized
In the meat
Child-butcher with
We are
No time for a shooting star.

This is what we are
This is with we are
We are with
Whatta word, Whatta Word!

*****

Reprimand

Eric Jensen

Anger freshly lit
Lingers on my lips
and begs my tongue
To crush your skull with words

I saw you as a hero falsely
Confirming your words
With swallowed pain
Fearfully wishing you wrong

I hate you because you speak the truth
And I am much too young
For such nonsense

*****

Jennifer Jay

(Yawn) and Stretch
In the sleepy sunlit morning
flowers open their yellow eyes.
Patches lazily pants
By a garden hose sunning its scales.

(Yawn) and Stretch

Shadows tenderly smooth the patio.
Bushes blindly reach for the light.
A puttering plane skids by in the
cauliflower clouds of a foamy sky's distance.

(YAWN) and STRETCH

*****

Haikus

Jeff Hicks

Actors take the stage
Light the elaborate set
speak your lines clearly

A leaf in the wind
Flutters to the pond surface
the water ripples

Egyptian mummies
Buried within catacombs
In the cryptic sands

The T.V. is on
Lights flash, sirens blare loudly
I hate nintendo

*****

"Mind Fuck"

fish, Inc.

When I think about the love we shared, there is always a certain feeling of sadness. The long walks, the time we spent alone by the fire, the way he held me when we made love; I miss him so much! Someday I may fall in love again, but I will never forget that wonderful summer I spent in the arms of Hitler.

*****

How to Fit A World Inside A Room

Shelly Partilla

Sitting under my stars in the dark with my ocean just within view, I let myself think of you. It's really not that hard but I usually prevent it--mostly because prolonged memories of you piss me off. I remember how you gasped eery time I swore and how repulsed you were when you saw me drunk because "it just wasn't like me." "YOU NEVER KNEW ME", I scream, but no one hears except for my parents who pass it off as just "another fit if morbid creativity."

Such a non-reaction would normally infuriate me but my impulses have become more humane in your absence. Damn. That's almost like admitting I miss you and I was trying so hard not to say it.

*****

Velvet Elvis

Matt Jones

I stand here looking at this painting
(All praise to the king and the hosts in Graceland!)
Sitting in the road dust, among the gravel
(Paltry dollars to walk away with this masterpiece in hand!)
A wind rolls up revealing his features.
(Oh, the genius of the style, the color, the King!)
A zephyr races through the lot, toppling the painting.
(Cruel fate, you steal his majesty like a brigand!)
I quickly reach down and put the painting right.
(My place in heaven assured for rescuing this jewel!)
I imagine it in my home.
(My friends will adore this object d'art LIKE AN ALTAR!)
I take it and move towards the cashier.
(Carefully, carefully for I maybe for this precious star!)
I delve into my pocket and fredge up 15 dollars.
(I stand now and forever as the envy of the Guggenheim!)
I pack it into my '78 Nova and drive away.
(I have it in my grasp! Rapture! Oh, Joy Sublime!)

*****

A Leopard And Its Spots

Donica Rampo

I'm sitting here crying - and laughing. Laughing and crying at the same time. It's probably only because I'm drunk - nothing else could make me act so insane. It's a good thing Charles is away on business. He would be very shocked to find me in this undesirable condition, and believe me, Charles is very rigid concerning his personal opinions on desirability - meaning right or wrong. Good old Charles. I love him dearly. He's so predictable and dull, and oh so dependable.

The children are spending the weekend with their grandparents, his parents, of course. Mine are dead. That's what I've always told him, anyway. So here I am, in this big old house. Alone with my Cognac. I never used to like this crap - I guess I took a liking to it after awhile.

When I met Charles, all I ever really drank was beer. He didn't know it, of course. Jesus, he didn't know anything about me - still doesn't, thank God. He's a sweet man. To him, I am Lucille Steadman - Beautiful, funny, and the mother of his children. He's a bit narrow-minded perhaps, but I am lucky to have him.

There are times now and then when I miss al the fun I used to have B.C. (Before Charles) - the parties, the dancing, and the boys. God how I loved the boys. Who they were never really mattered - only how they made me feel in those lonely hours of the night. There were hours of the night.
I remember so well. There were shy guys with silky kisses and rebels with rough caresses. And I loved changing any mood the boys came with to one of total exhilaration. Charles wasn't the first, last, or the best, but that isn't why I married him. I loved Charles, then and now, and he's the guy all the girls wanted to marry, And he would have a cardiac if he saw the skeletons I have in my closet.

I used to wear the tightest skirts - ones up to here. Now I can afford a Chanel Suit now and just say, a limousine is much more accommodating.

I think I've changed alot since I met Charles. We have two beautiful children - and I'm doing the best to bring them up. They are his kids - I'm certain of that, I'm always very careful. I "do" alot of charity functions and I have a social circle of wealthy wives.

They all comment on my charming "wit and wisdom." That makes me laugh too. My "wisdom" as they call it, is one of those fringe benefits of having a lifestyle they wouldn't dare dream of. Or maybe they would. How should I know? Maybe some of those priss wives are pulling off a ruse just as effectively as I am.

Well enough of that mental meandering. I better pull myself together - I hear someone in the drive. Its probably my "date" for the evening - Rick or Ron or something. It doesn't matter - He has nice arms.

Oh Lucille - inside you'll always be Lucy.

*****

Heir to the Fractured Throne

Maria Mellinger

I wouldn't have held him in such a tight grip
If you hadn't crushed him in the palm of your fist.
I wouldn't have dressed him in poems and plaid
If you hadn't stripped him of what little he had.
I wouldn't have praised him to such high regard
If you hadn't berated him and loft him scarred.
I wouldn't have loved him if only I knew
That was what he wanted, and he wanted you.

Painfully Pick it Apart

*****

Maria Mellinger

You drew yourself a picture of me through my parents,
A Lincoln Log house of lies, a Tinker Toy heart
You thought I built for you. You introduced yourself,
And despite the childishness we became friends,
Coloring class together and playing pirate in the park.
It had to end, like childhoods do, with a mural
Or two. Now clean up your toys ad go home, boy.

*****

An Empty Chair At The Dinner Table

Pam Hendricks

It is so unnatural for a child to die before you.
A family member gone before their time...
'Crime Victim' the police would say;
What a Cold way to say you're heart's been ripped out today.
You know a piece of you has been buried too,
Something you never get back.
That you can touch and feel but not speak?
The language of the heart has no words,
no cure for the ache that consumes you...
An empty chair at the dinner table------
How symbolic-------
Is this grief looks like in our hearts?
People whose families have been fractured; broken
Never again to be whole.
You see them in all regular places.
You'll know them by the expression on their faces; walking wounded...
Scarred by some unseen force; fate?
Perhaps, but by whose choice?
Brothers and sisters with a hollow look;
Afraid to love.....afraid to lose.
More than they can bear.
Mothers and fathers carrying their grief upon their breast,
Like an old veteran displaying his medals on his chest.
They ask 'when will this pain go away?'
Soon, very soon, others would say.
But you know it never will...
A burden too great to bear, but unable to put it down.
Alive, but not really living,
Dead without dying....

*****

Shoebox

Michelle Forys

You begin with nothing.

All your life you learn and gain experience...
too my material things.

Collecting possessions, approval, and wealth,
until you cannot count it all; still, you want more.

Then, one day, the struggling ends.
And you find that the most precious things you own
are the smallest ones.

A picture, a ring, a pressed flower, a letter.
Memories and dreams.

Treasures in a shoebox.

*****

Childhood

Michelle Forys

Do you remember how excited yo were
When you got your first set of
24 pack Crayolas?
Or when you got all the way around the classroom
Playing "Around the World" in the timetables?
(The multiples of six were impossible)
Or when you had to square dance with that
One kid that actually Liked holding your hand?
He never did get the Cooties.

*****

Go Away

Donica Rampo

You're too close
get back
I can't stand
having you so near to me.
Wait
You don't understand.
I like you
I love you
But you can't see how
Crazy it makes me-
Having you there
Right there
And you're not mine to hold
to touch
to keep-

*****

Maria Mellinger

My brush,
throws herself into the paint,
Dances upon the canvas
In yellow acapella,
Kisses the sunset open mouth,
Leaving a lipstick trace cloud
And a stroke of summer.
I wash the happiness off her,
Running the colors into
A tap water puddle
Of what could have been painted.

*****

Mellinger

Deceiving rose petals,
I suppose,
Are romantic
When saved in a jar
with cards
From past lovers
Lined up like a
solitaire game
on a shelf,
But I'd prefer
Flowers stolen
From Central Park
Pressed in a book of photos
Celebrating the day
we spent together.

*****

Maria Mellinger

She saved boxes of petals to make a
Rosary, the flowers earned with her sins,
Her diary a book of psalms to pray,
Forgiveness an alter used to begin
The ritual again. Her god was one
man today and another tomorrow,
Gone in the name of the father, the son,
and the Holy Spirit. Sinners borrow
Her body in exchange for her son, her
Love too heavy a cross to bear, her heart
A promise of afterlife that's unsure.
Like a Christian the lions tore apart,
she saves the pieces of petals and men
to piece her life back together again.

*****

Sonnet 21

Maria Mellinger

The story happened inside a cigar
box, The setting was Havana at night,
Motorcycles transporting us afar,
Fresh into a plot, a lyric, a fight
For short stories. The hero was brown eyed
for a change, the size of a cigarette,
And rolled hard into an image that lied.
The plot complicates, lest we forget,
Included tour buses and tobacco
In a scented struggle for cardboard space,
Groupies in plastic ("It's a Girl!") to go,
And me, isolated and lost someplace.
I wrote to the hero and burned the word;
He escaped from his wrapper, so I heard.

*****

Maria Mellinger

Grandma used to tell me the sleep stuff in
the corners of my morning eyes was left-
over sand from the sandman, and my sin
made it stick. I couldn't imagine theft
or pain, only Grandma praying for me
and saying, "The sandman's coming. I can
hear his step. Pray now while you can still see."
I prayed to god to save me from this man
with his bag of sand. Later Grandpa would
tell me that sleep stuff was eye boogers and
"Don't pick and eat'em, there's plenty food could
be cooked in the kitchen." I held his hand
as he died. Grandma's eyes scolded, "Tut-tut;"
Then she cried so much, sleep stuff held them shut.

*****

Winner Takes All

Shelly Partilla

You've given me too much time
To think about what I'm doing
But still I can't decide
What to do.

You've given me too many questions
To answer for you
But still I overwork my brain
To discover logic.

You've given me too many excuses
To buy yourself more time
Bit still I throw time at you
For free.

You've given me too many poems
To fill my paper
But still I think and write
Like a machine.

You've given me too many passionate memo-
ries
Of happy love
But I still walk away
Before you take my soul.

*****

There's No Maid in Heaven

Shelly Partilla

Why so feeling have to be so complex?
And why so I have to back up my emotions?
Can't I simply feel what I feel
And think what I think
Without you wandering around
Behind me
Wondering what's going on
Inside my cluttered head?

Don't ask me not to be offended
When you want me to tell you everything about
me.
But when my stupidity wears off,
You'll find
I really don't mind at all.

I'm not playing with your mind
And I'm not using you for personal gain
But just don't start screaming
And hoping that this is more than it is.
Because reading between the lines
Gets you nowhere
And I never jump in before I test the water.

Decisions

Jannine Passehl

i've been down now for
so long
that it looks like up
to me.
this thing i've got for you
will almost surely drive me crazy.
i think about you
all the time,
there's nothing i can do
to get your image
off my mind -
it sticks to me like glue.
each time you're near
my heart elates,
but still i seem
to hesitate;
not able to let you see my desire,
unwilling to take it one step higher -
to go the distance and
take that risk.
afraid of your resistance,
yet still longing for your kiss.

and i wonder...

will you ever know?
will you ever see?
will i ever learn?

that decision's up to me.

*****

God

Shelly Partilla

As you float over me
And watch me,
Do you really care
Or are you laughing at the stupidity you see?

As people gape at you
On the pedestal
They put you on,
Is your head
Growing with egotistical madness?
Do you fantasize
About ruling the world?

(continued)

When people ask you to save their dying child
Or rescue them from pain,
Do you smile
When you realize
How much power
People think you have?

Will you ever come down
And show your face
And prove to me that you exist
Or must I
Have faith?

*****

World Mold Me

Shelly Partilla

As my world grew
Bigger and Bigger
And my talents
Got smaller and smaller,
My views became more radical,
My personality more intense,
And my shyness less obvious.

I fooled you, didn't I?

*****

Love Cuts Deep

Janine Passehl

your love cuts deep with in me
breaking open an old wound
allowing it to bleed freely.
the only way to stench the flow
is with a kiss.

i fear i will bleed to death.

*****

Maria Mellinger

My rapture lush afghan
Was wrapped about my shoulder
The night you kissed me
Goodbye.
It was the only detail
I could remember through
The blanket of pain.

Alone but Not Lonely

Shelly Partilla

You've proven to me
That I shouldn't let myself
Get too involved
With people.

You've proven to me
That I shouldn't believe
That everyone is as nice
As they seem .

You've proven to me
That I should never trust
Anyone but myself.

You've proven to me
That becoming attached
In relationships
Only gives me pain.

I'm not screwed up
Really.
I've just finally realized
That the real world
Is painful and cold.

Maybe I just need someone
Who thinks like me
And feels like me.

Or maybe I just need
To change the world.

When will I learn?

*****

Shelly Partilla

I've been looking so long for a prince
And I bang at the castle door
And the guards come running on gallant white horses.
They carry keen daggers
And I have a jeweled shield
Of stunning beauty and workmanship,
But it offers no genuine protection.
I turn to run (like I always do)
But I'm surrounded by those much stronger than I
So I scream (to defend myself)
"It's not love I want--just happiness"
But they know I'm lying.
They send me away without physical harm

(continued)

And I run and I run
For years on end
And whenever confronted,
I scream (to defend myself)
"It's not love I want--only happiness."
But no one ever believes me
Because they know
I'm afraid of the men on the gallant white horses
And I'll never put down my shield.

*****

No Longer Shall I Worship

Martin Nieznanski

I molded an image of you
From a pile of shit I
Found on the sidewalk.

Then I stepped on the icon
With all my strength,
In a way it was beautiful

I cleaned off my boot by
Sliding in the grass and
By using a stick to scrape the treads
But
Nothing I could do can ever
Remove the foul odor that
Reminds me of you

*****

I Can Be Stubborn Too

Shelly Partilla

I don't want to smile
And I don't want to play.
I just want to lie on my bed
And think
And dream
And fantasize about what could never really happen.
And when you tell me that it's unhealthy,
I'd have to disagree
Because I firmly believe
Fantasizing fulfills requirements
That reality just can't handle.

*****

Dawn Mooney

I begged him, to leave
To forget me
So I could go back
To poetry
And solitude
As I said the world
I knew I was wrong
But it was much too late
To change my meaning

With tears in my eyes
I watched him go
And hoped one day he'd understand
What I just could not explain

I wrote my poems
All alone
I sang my songs with sad melodies
I tried to forget
The mistakes I've made
And thought of him constantly.

*****

Lauri Stahl

One summer night
As I went walking
I came upon
Two Angels talking

So intent when they
In their conversation
They didn't notice me
Taking dictation.

But it soon was apparent
Twasn't the words which were said
As the quality of love
And light which they spread.

I opened my soul
To inhale this presence
I was filled with love, joy
Strength and Forbearance.

Emotions overwhelmed me.
Tears closed my eyes.
A gentle touch on my shoulder
Took me by surprise.

"Sweet Soul of God
We meant you no distress
Only love, Peace and Joy
God's gifts of happiness."

Then just as quick as
A twinkle of an eye
They were gone before
I could say good-bye.

(continued)

Now perchance my tale seems
Strange and fictitious,
But if God were to grant
Only one of my wishes,

I pray that it might be --
Everyone will hear Angels talking
Wherever and whenever
They decide to go walking.

*****

Take the Ball

Shelly Partilla

I've built
Shelves and shelves full of misplaced love
And every time I invite someone in the door,
An anxious hope believes this is the one.
But too many applicants walk out empty-
handed
Because the requirements are just too tough.
I'm so very tired of interviews
And compromises
And excuses.
Somewhere there is someone with prior
experience
And flexible hours.
But he'll have to knock on my door
Because I don't know where else to look
And I'm tired of being my own cupid.

*****

Careful

Martin Nieznanski

A sheet of paper traded places
with me the other day.My Mead-
possessed body took a pen and
started to scribble its poems
of suffering onto me.I am better now.

Now, while I write, I
try not to be so harsh with
the words that I lay down,
for it is an awful burden for
paper to carry them.

*****

Martin Nieznanski

I don't like words,
So the rest of this
Poem is in another
Language that
Only I can see
And understand

*****

So For My Favorite

Clifford Druml

Unrelenting agony,
Torment and cruelty,
Pion and his best friend betrayal,
They say you're nothing,
They say you're useless,
They say you don't count,
They, They, They
As long as you believe,
Because you know you feel,
And you know you can accomplish,
Once you become they,
And run with them,
Then and only then,
Have you become what they have set
out for you to take,
The nothing inferior,
Instead, choose the path of individuality.
You know yourself all harassment is a joke,
and true ignorance is the punchline.

*****

Mine

Martin Nieznanski

the only way
to understand
anything I write
is to take time
out of your life
and live mine
for awhile

*****

Amputation

Lauri Stahl

Today they cut off his leg
Although he did plead and beg.
It's only a limb they said,
Be glad it'd your leg and not your head.
But some profound words can't console,
The young man who feels he's lost his sole.
The infection was too far advanced.
And how they made it hard to dance,
Hard to run and play football,
Or basketball, any fun things at all.
But he really does have a choice in this matter.
To either lay there just getting fatter
Or use that brilliant head they did save
And find more illustrious paths to pave.
He'll come to this realization, eventually
But it must come from himself, and not from me.
So for a while I will leave.
I'll give him time and space to grieve.

*****

Only the Shelves Filled

Martin Nieznanski

Only the shelves, filled
With scriptures of all shapes, and
The closed balcony were
My friends

I was envious
Of the pigeons living on
The balcony, while
Watching them kiss and strut
And flutter, even
They had others to
Be with

It was painful to realize that
In some ways the birds
Were better than me, and
That I could never be as
Lucky as them.
Only the shelves filled and
I remained empty

*****

Steven Custer

When the sky
turned to cement,
and the earth to
air, I took you
inside and protected
you within a cage
of bone.

Centuries of blood and
soul swirled around
and surrounded you,
Therefore, no evil
could contaminate
you.

Everyday you would
climb up my spine,
and crawl inside
my head, where we
would laugh and cry,
marvel and ponder
what life had in store
for us.

Our existence was
perfect, so peaceful,
until one dump and
dark day snatched it
away.

I snoozed and there
you stood beside me.
You stared, I stared and
made the slightest motion
to move.
You turned and ran.

*****

Musician's Lair

Dawn Mooney

When I joined
Your symphony of insanity
I thought I could handle
Your syncopated rythems
And dissonant chords
But with every rehearsal
I began to realize
That the more I tried and
No matter how hard I practiced
The intonation was off
No music was made
And our relationship
Was nothing but noise.

*****

Gerald R. Scott

Raven's eyes
Poisoned with perfection
Descending upon the charioteers
And Luna, the moon, pale as the bleakness of the desert
Bright as the darkness of the stygian encircling it
I see this from my enthralling euphoric cliff-seat
Below me only the eventide grass-floor
Alive
Alive and changing
Changing as all things do with the orb's brightness
Children dance upon its coming
The above slowly, drips into the chaos which bore it
Lavender bleeds from the east as the non-nocternals wake
And like always, logic takes over & slashes the mysticness of Night
Or my knees I witness science appear & am banished back
to the Now-man

*****

A Ghost Within

Laura V. Cervantes

Trembling in the shadows
there is no refuge.
Silent pleas of despondent desires
embrace in painful bliss.
Thoughts linked in solitude
relinquished to exist.

*****

Matt Jones

The sawing of God
That manhandles mankind
The hammering of Jesus,
Whose got the nails,
Take them down
Put them up
Watch where you stand
On the platform of man
Cu'z here's stigmata
By popular demand
So let's just get to know
The dark copper taint
That's with each white saint

On . Traveling...

Laura V. Cervantes

I dream of far away places
vividly in my mind.
Tales of ancient races
speak as though as one in kind.

The histories and cultures
that surge from this fountain
are transient treasures
as vast as the ocean.

The remnants of these
are left behind to admire
as monuments the freeze
and transcend to inspire.

*****

"A Poem About Anything"

Jennifer Jay

Cotton duck? That can't be right!
But here! It's one of the package's features.
I just want a canvas for my artistic might,
not some fuzz web-footed creature!

Besides, what a terribly unsuitable thought -
the streaming blood gives sucha chill.
It'd make a frightful quack, no doubt,
to nail your work by the bill!

Acrylic won't do on a mass feathers,
Yet some artists are sure to try her.
Instead of "cotton duck" it rather should print
"cotton fiber."

*****

Maria Mellinger

The graffiti read "Geisha girl,
Go and marry lonely boy at graveside.
It is the way of the gods for funeral flowers
To fade and for you to grow again."
An answer was painted beneath:
"Flower arranging is for those
who can place the dead and the dying
In beautiful containers for safe keeping.
In gardens geishas grow."

*****

Maria Mellinger

Wearing a backwards baseball cap
And pulling details of my life
Onto a string as if they were bends,
She gave me advice that meant nothing.
"sprinkle Night shade on his napping pillow.
Kiss him when the black crow cries."
She leaned forwards sitting indian style,
Her bare feet atop her overall knees.
"Bury his name in the mouth of a dead bird.
Season vinegar with his wine."
The hippie soothsayer chive spoke to me
So she could have my boy when I set him free.

*****

Beatle Rip-Off Poem

Steve Custer

"The Beatles...we'll call ourselves the Beatles!"
- john lennon

I am you
you are me
he is she
and we are
all
together,

We all live
in a yellow
submarine in
an octopoise's
garden, in the
albert hall.

She loves you.
Ya.
Ya.
Ya.

"Well, its better than "Johnny and the Moondogs."
- paul mc cartney

*****

David Tieman

On a picture perfect canvas
Painted violet
By a blossoming riot of color,
An innocent girl
Dances with laughter
As she twirls dizzily
With her tan arms extended
And her petite hands fanned
To catch the meandering wind
By mother sunshine
All summer long

Time to Leave the Sandbox

Shelly Partilla

I won't ask anything of you
So I won't be disappointed.
Just love me
Or not--
I really don't care.
I'm now past my dessert
But the quicksand
Took too much effort
And heart-pieces fell in the bottomless hole.
Regeneration takes time
And wisdom--
Both of which I have very little of.
Maturity is my last resort
Because I'm tired of being the only adult
Playing children's games.
I don't fit in with your playgroup--
I'm sick of being the leader
And I don't want to share my toys.

*****

Etiquette

Shelly Partilla

I am told not to cry because crying is childish.
So I keep the pain inside.

I am told not to laugh because that is immature.
So I sit without expression.

I am told to only because discipline never
hurts.
So I don't experiment and I never learn.

I am told to conform because that is normal.
So I dress like everyone else and I don't know
who I am.

I am told to believe in God because god is love.
So reluctantly go to church and pray to some-
thing I don't
understand.

Then I'm told to think because it leads to great
discoveries.
And I do.
And I discover that sometimes you have to
break the rules.

*****

Candlelight Heroes

Shelly Partilla

Your face dances in the light of a million candles--
All lit by me.
Your eyes stare at mine and I tell myself to look away
But nothing moves.
You even begin today something but your words get lost
Somewhere between make-believe and reality.

Don't be afraid to wonder what I'm thinking.
I wonder what you're thinking.
just don't put me on such a pedestal.
I'm really just like you--
I'm not a genius.

I'm reaching out for anything to comfort me.
I'm only looking for one person to understand.
I don't want love anymore--just friendship.
Too rash,
And too overwhelming.

If I think hard enough,
I could give you a million reasons to need love
But never one to want it.
My necessities are becoming more refined and more basic
And your light is finding
But I'm not afraid of the dark.

*****

Tribute to Dr. Seuss (1904-1991)

Shellie R. Smith

He put a Wocket
In my pocket,
And a cat in a hat,
A Grinch in our Christmas,
And I thank him for that.

Sam I Am and his
Green eggs and ham,
The Seven Lady Godivas, too;
We that learned to read
With your many books
Will never forget you!

*****

But of You

Steve Custer

I walked; and when I walked,
I wondered where the sky had gone.
And why the earth touched my feet
as sandpaper.

I thought; and as I thought, I
cried. Sanity is not an inanimate
object; no it is not. Tears are not
tears. They are droplets of Sanity; the
more one sheds, the less one has.

I prayed, I prayed the pleading
prayer of an addicted sinner.
There came no reply.

And then, after my sanity had
run itself dry through eye socket
faucets, I sang.

I danced upon the earth. I saw
beautiful lights that beckoned me to a
fate that I had not yet matured to
receive.

No, Instead I walked on into
my solitude, screaming, dreaming,
dreaming. If not of anything,
but of you.

*****

You Wanted

Steven Custer

I remember days of touching.
Laying next to you, giving you what
you wanted.
I remember the beauty of the
first. You wanted.

The boy bowed his head and
walked into the dark forest.
When night fell, he floated.

He floated on the water and
wanted to kiss the flowers that
rose around him. He did not;
for fear that if he did, they would
Leave.

*****

Fred

Steve Custer

A poem named
Fred once
ran and played with
my writing,
but the environmentalists
abolished machinery, and
so he was lost to the
sickening space within
my mind.

*****

Brave

Steve Custer

Yes.
We made love.
We made love with words.
Words that crawled
and charted, arched
and knew.
Yes.
We made love.
WE
Never touched,
We made love to
The "other" we
Couldn't have with
Words so similar
to our thoughts;
words
That danced
and prayed.
Yes
We made love,
with words.

*****

Eric Jensen

Wearily I wonder
In the early edge of summer
If you know me like I know you
Silhouette in Blue

*****

David Tieman

Electronically cruel
Contemporary girl
Etched her greed
Into the crotch of this blinded world
A blossoming start
Bound to her heart
A mental guillotine
Disturbingly sharp
Creatively deprived
A ferocious appetite
Beheaded in the climax
Of captivity's plight

*****

ING

Jannine Passehl

following
scheming
aching
dreaming
gazing
wanting
needing

loving.

*****

Jennifer Jay

Sun, sun, sun.
You see the fields and all
the fields have soybean corn.
Pink milkweed sneaks in and so does Queen
Anne's lace.
You're alone.
All these fields have them but one.
One has a cluster of trees.

Go to It.

The trees are bright and full.
Large leaves and thick trunks,
Heavy bark, rich and rough.
A few filled nests spot the boughs.
All of the trees are like this.
All but one.

Go to It.

Tall and sharp, no limbs to speak of,
this tree burnt, sinister, somber, shiny.
A bird's plump corpse lies near by,
ants roaming and its eye glinting
by certain angles of sun. The tree
had a knot. Wonder what's there.
Go to It.

*****

The Glass Princess

Matt Jones

Oh, my most beautiful princess, how you do
Enchant me with your sweetest siren's song
And send me crashing against the cold
And unloving Mother of Us All.

Dance for me, my stone-sweet princess.

Oh, how you fly free in the face of all
Once known, how you love and despise
And love to despise me with your frozen
And beautiful countenance.

Tell me, my sharp crystal beauty.

How you shatter my heart of stone into
Glass and offer me sharp crystal needles
And hate in its place and part my
Soul with your freezing fires of passion.

Sing for me, my glass fury.

Of why you became more and less than
We, the rock-common terrain of Man
And how you came to be forged of the
Most perfect of flaws in heaven and earth.

Fly before me, my freezing eternity.

Oh, it is the greatest crime that flesh,
Soft and sweet, pink and ripe, young
And innocent should petrify and crystallize
And crumble before its time.

Weep for me, my icy icon.

Oh, what things must I do to return
Your soul of All Saints to the intricate
And beautiful curvature of your form
And restore the temple from where it came.

Weep for your loss, my lovely frost.

Shall I sell my soul for the sharpest
Cut diamond that you are?
Shall I follow your dance, bound to you
For God's will forevermore?
Or shall I let you go until you pirouette
And spiral and dance and weave your
Own doom?

Care to dance, my love?

*****

The Writer

Michelle Forys

Begin with me a story.
You may write a line, a paragraph,
Or become a chapter in the book of my life.
Help me to hold the pen,
To form the words into phrases,
And to write down the story
Or how you have become a part of me.

Teach me to be the greatest author
By tearing down the barriers I try to hide behind.
Set me free when I am with you.
Let me say all those things I cannot say without
tears.
Let me share myself so totally with you
That when the tears do come,
You will be there to kiss them all away.

I want you to read over my shoulder
About how you given me the strength
To push aside my insecurities
And start to love myself again.

I want to read me like this open book,
From beginning to end.
I want to fill your heart with my words,
Myself,
And have you be the keeper of my soul.

I will not make you promise me "forever."
I will not make you say "always."

Just when you finish this page,
Turn it, and help me begin another.
Let time not let the memories fade
Like pages turning yellow.
But, let the story begin...

*****

A Celtic Poem

Michelle Forys

It begins with the sword maiden
Embroidering the scabbard in her lap.
Looking up from her work,
She sees the White Heart
His great, knowing eyes searching her own.
He looks on the sword which will spill his blood
So that the rains may come.

Firelight.

(continued)

In the ring of stones,
The bonfire burns
With flames that like the sky
As if they could burn the stars.
The chants from this distance sound nothing more than a hum.
Cloaked men pacing docile 'round the flame.
Shadows against the tall, bluish-grey stones
make them look like Giants themselves.

And among them stands the merlin.

Golden eyes looking through each man
To the soul beneath
To be sure his words speak the truth.
Any falseness dies here, body and soul,
Under the sword's gentle blade.
A flash of metal,
Then the clash stripes with red.
The flow of blood,
While the rest continue their endless murmur,
Rhythmic and droning,
Causing the edges of vision to haze
And the Ears to heat what they would normally have missed.
The door to the other world stands open.

At the entrance
No light to carry inside.
Reaching now with hands that have become so much more
Than weapons and tools,
Eyes for the newly blind.

All animals, large and small,
Have become his predators
And all have become his ally, of he so chooses.
Taking the eyes of a Hawk,
Speed of the Stag,
The Heart of the Lion,
And the will of the Dragon,
Following his own path from the crossroads.
And respecting both the Guardian of the path and himself
For his Decision.

This night, the sea is not salted with the Earth alone.

The gull scream as the whirl above the sea.
Waters have been salted with the blood of men.
Sightless heads of the newly dead
Rest on pikes watching their blood color the seafoam.
The very waters that carried them here
To this foreign land called Britain
Will wash their blood up on to the shores of their distant homelands.
Their ears no longer hearing and wailing of their wives.

Lonely heads atop the battlements
Now forever looking toward homes they will not reach.

Still the druids make their humming.

Making sure the seasons change,
the days pass,
the sun rise,
the rains fall.
The Cauldron of Rebirth brings one year into another.
The song continues, without hesitation
Without pause for breath.
As a man's life leaves him, he passes his gifts on to his son
So the he may stand in the circle to take his place.

Humming, always humming.

The Earth becomes, the water flows,
the wind never stops blowing.
The fire burns.
And the humming,
Grows louder.

Yet spears are made
And swords are forged and the shields beaten from plows.
Bards sing the Song.
The Song of the Land.

*****

Enter the Chapel.

Where the Glaston bush grew from the Armathean staff
And, in the parallel, where Avalon lay,
See the Lady, see the Lord.
On His table see the Cup of His Blood
And the Bread of His body.
On Her table are the flowers of Her maidenhood
And the fruits of Her harvest.
Both with ask for faith of their people,
Just one has been speaking longer.

And the light of the stars will sing in tune with the hum.

Echoing and answering the music
Of the Wheel of Life.
The Cauldron will be of plenty.
The Animals will be free.
The seasons will change in their due course.
The flowering of Lorges is upon us,
And the Lord is just sleeping.

*****

I Have Changed

Michelle Forys

Welcome me into your arms
As the huntress you have watched from afar.
I hunted down wolves stronger than you,
And game I had no right to destroy.
But I learned to walk away.
Sometimes I struggle with jaws at my throat.
And sometimes the blade that bit into my flesh
Was my own.
Now I am Strong enough to see you
To meet your eyes with my own.
Not in fear.
Not in pain.
And not as you had left me before, for dead.
I am here now, nor prepared to die for you
Like some weeping, shallow girl,
But as an equal, an even match.

*****

Cluade and Effect

Patrick F. Walsh

Having stumbled through life making too many mistakes, too many enemies and suffering too many consequences, Claude needed an ego-saving device. He felt beat up emotionally. Still, he remained as arrogant and impulsive as ever acting on his new-found beliefs. He had convinced himself that the law of cause and effect applied to all things; that every-thing was strictly determined and was bound to happen exactly the way it did, which,of course, precluded free will. There, people were not responsible for their actions; whatever will be, will be.

So, being a man who lived by his convictions, Claude began crossing streets without looking. Six times he made it across safely, causing many accidents. Amidst irate cursing and shaking fists, extended from open windows, Claude walked away serenely, believing this heavy metal concert he had orchest-rated really had been inevitable. He left frus-trated motorists with the traumatic task of extri-cating their treasured vehicles from around trees and lampposts and he didn't feel even a trace of guilt. I n fact, he felt elated. What a great philoso-phy! he thought.

The seventh time he crossed a street without looking, Claude sustained severe injuries after being struck by a car. Claude suspected the driver had hit him on purpose because be recalled seeing him in his battered car at another accident scene. It was clear cut case of premeditated free will, Claude thought deliriously, on his way to the hospital.

His suffering, after the accident and during his rehabilitation, had a profound effect on Cluade's thinking and caused him to reconsider his phil-osophy. After all, he reasoned, was he not part of the determining process, a link in the chain of cause and effect? Whatever he decided to do was a piece of history waiting to happen; and no matter how little influence he exerted, still, he was only one who could prevail upon the world in "his" individual way. Everyone, because of his unique bio-chemistry, social conditioning, and education develops an individual will which he feels free to assert in making decisions whether right or wrong, good or bad. Could it be that free will is nothing more than the freedom or urgency one feels to control his own life by trying to understand the circumstances that affect it? Was so-called free will just an extension of the will to survive? Anyway, his future hadn't happened yet, and he alone, as an entity in the course of human experi-ence, could make it happen. He was the catalyst! He felt, at once, a sense of relief and power sweep over him.

The next time he crossed a street, Claude looked both ways. "Made it!" he shouted triumphantly as he stepped on the opposite curb. A heavy tool, dropped by a lineman working above, killed Claude instantly.

Claude and some of his effects are buried in Mount Valley Cemetery.

*****

Perceptions

Lauri Stahl

I sat alone on a cold bench by the lakeside. I watched with reverence, the rocks and the waves in their power-play. The rocks unassailable, and the waves unyielding to them, unwilling to stop there, continued to spray themselves over the topand beyond.

I was thankful for the earliest of the hour. Thatway, I wouldn't have to share this piece of lakesidewith anyone. Especially, the homeless bums, and all those druggies and gang members that are beginning to over run all the public places now. Theyfrighten me so. No sooner had the thought streakedacross my mind than a lone figure came from behindme, and walked past to be closer to the water's edge.One glance at him made me cringe.

His face still had it's youthful look. He couldn't bemore than sixteen or seventeen; and yet, his face was lined and discolored like my grandfather's. His eyeshad a painful intensity about them. Eyes set deep in a thin face, circled with darkness, a glazed look coatingthem. His frame was but a skeleton making him look anarexian pale as his clothes hung about his body. The simple T-shirt and sweat pants were sizes toolarge for him. (Probably got them at some mission as a hand out.) Now I realize that I have lived a shelteredlife style, and never had much contact with these kind of people. But, I have heard my friends, and others, talk about them - how they become so affected to drugs they don't care about eating any more. Lord, why can't theseyoung kids see what drugs do to them!

He vacantly looked at the waves as if not really seeingwhat was before him, but looking at some internal picturehis mind had prepared for him. He yanked off the baseball style cap he wore to rub his head. (Probably to helpstimulate his brain.) His head was completely bald. Oh,Great God, He's one of those gang members that go around and shave their heads. I had heard they were a rough bunch.

His mind functioned for a moment to bring his attention to the present moment. He turned and started walking along the rocky edge. As he walked his legs wouldn't cooperate with his brain. (How could it with all those drugs!) His body reeled and swayed with each step he took. He paused, then tried a couple more steps and almost pitched forward. Oh, Sweet Jesus, he's stoned out of his head right now. Whatever makes such a young man ruin his life like this?

I couldn't pull my eyes off of him. I was mesmerized by this degradation of a human soul. I could feel fear creeping slowly through my body. I wanted to get up and run from this strange kid, but my fear immobilized me. Oh God, help my legs move. Too late. He spotted me, and is now making his way toward me with comical sway and stagger step. "Do you mind if I sit here for awhile? It seems I've lost my sea-legs" he said.

Oh God, what can I say? I say nothing. I slide over farther on the bench so I don't have to be real close to him.
Lord protect me.

I tried to pretend to be absorbed by the view, trying to ignore the uncomfortable silence. But I felt my Christian background tugging at my conscience. I should speak with the young man. Set him straight. Help him see the errors of his way. So I bravely turned toward him, and my voice filled with God-fearing righteousness said: "Son, you really must stop taking drugs."

Sad eyes looked directly into mine. "Lady, you don't understand."

"Yes", I quickly answered. "I do understand Those drugs are killing you - can't you see?"

"Like I said, Lady you don't understand. I can't live without the drugs that did this to me. Those drugs are my life -- the only hope I have."

I was speechless. How could you argue with a mind like that? In a moment of silence, the boy gentlytouched my shoulder and smiled a brilliant smile that erased all the lines and years from his face. "It's not just drugs", he said. "It's Chemo."

He stood up and left. I didn't see which direction.
Silent tears blinded me. I cried not only for the young man.
fighting his cancer through chemotherapy; but mostly, I cried for myself wrapped up in my own cancer of fearful pre-judgements.

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The Silent Boy

Michelle Forys

The street lights came on just after sunset.

I stood between the corner and my eight year-old son, Adam, in the ring of people who stared agape at the motionless body lying in the flower bed.

*****

Her face was white and
perfectly smooth. Her skin seemed somehow flawless, an uncommon sight for a teenaged girl what all the chocolate she could set her hands on whenever she would babysit Adam. She looked like she had fallen asleep there among the violets and gardenias, but the horror-stricken expressions on the faces of my neighbors said that this poor girl was far from sleeping. She was dead.

I went out for the evening with some of my friends from work an asked Monica to watch Adam. She agreed readily; it would be an easy job because my son could not "talk-back" to her... Adam is autistic. With that, I left, leaving Adam to his crayolas and drawing paper.

No sooner had my car pulled out of the driveway, Monica was talking on the phone to her friend Angela.

"Hey, Angie, are you serious? He really asked you about me in Biology?" Monica asked, almost dropping the receiver.

"Yes," said Angie, "Michael told me that he thinks you're 'hot'. In fact, he wanted to know what you were doing tonight."

"Oh great. I would have to be babysitting for Mrs. Fisk when the man-of-my-dreams finally notices that I'm alive!"

"Don't panic, Mon. You'd better believe I fixed that situation for you---"

"what did you say?" Monica interrupted.

"Well, Angie purred, "I sorta mentioned Fisk's address to him, and, um, he just gave me one of those wicked grins and said he 'might be in the neighborhood'."

"Holy God! You're kidding? That's so awesome!" Monica almost fainted.

Adam continued to draw while Monica chattered on, but
with her excited cries, he snapped out of his daydream world
of black-inked outlines t be filled in with color and turned
to see what she was jumping so excitedly about.

Monica suddenly stopped jumping. Oh damn. I almost forgot. Mrs. Fisk freaks out if I have somebody in her house without permission. She thinks that strangers will scare Adam or something. So much huh?"

C'mon, what the heck is the matter with you? Are you honestly gonna let that kid ruin your big chance with 'Mr. Right'?"

"Angie, what do you expect me to do? Sneak Michael into the house?"

"Sure. Why not? The kid certainly can't tell on you, right?" Angie said, chuckling at her own comment.

"No, I guess not, but still..."

Adam turned the page of his coloring book to a picture of Snow White dancing with Dopey dwarf. He watched as Monica talked animate on the phone. He watched the way her long brunette ponytail waged when she nodded her head.

"Yeah. Okay. I'll let him in when he gets here," Monica told Angie.

Adam heard her, and although he could not speak, he understood what those words meant. They were going to have company. Then, he began to color again.

Monica was standing in front of the full length mirror examining herself for signs of fatigue as she ran a brush through her hair that she let fall down around her shoulders.

Mirror, Mirror on the wall, she mused, who's the fairest of them all?

She continued to preen before her reflection when something suddenly moved behind her. She jolted her head around and her heart skipped a beat.

It was only little Adam holding out one of his drawings to her, the one with the dancing figures.

Catching her breath, Monica took the paper. "Why thank you Adam. Is this for me?"

Adam regarded her question with silence and a smile.

Monica looked back at the picture and realized that Adam had given Snow White a long, brown, scribbled ponytail and Dopey had grown curly blond hair just like Adam's.

(continued)

"Aw Adam, this is you and me, right?" Monica bentdown and scooped the artist into her arms for a hug.

Adam could not tell her how wonderful he felt as Monica held him, but he was sure whoever the company was, they were not going to steal her attention away from him. Not his Snow White. No way.

DING DONG

"Oh my God. He's here!" Monica said as she lowered Adam to the floor and dashed to the front door. In her hurry, she let the picture fall to the carpet.

Adam, tears swelling in his eyes, picked up his and reluctantly shuffled after his thwarted love, Monica.

"Please come in," Monica said t the princely young man at the front door.

Michael, hands behind his back, stepped into the house just as Adam peeked around the corner to see who was at the door. He handed Monica a golden box with a red ribbon tied around it.

"Just a little something to ask you of you'd like to see a movie with me sometime, "Michael said, handing Monica the gift.

Blushing, she tore through the wrapping like a child on Christmas morning. "Chocolate! My absolute favorite! How did you know?" Monica asked Michael as she popped one of th e candies in her mouth.

"A little bird told me," Michael said with one of his patented wicked grins.

Adam's heart sank and hot tears drew themselves down his dwarfish, baby face. It was all too obvious to him that Monica liked this stranger's gift far more than the picture he had worked so hard on and Monica had so quickly forgotten about. He picked up the picture and tore it to pieces throwing them at Michael and Monica.

"Her there, Sport, getting a little upset, are we?
Michael teased Adam. "maybe you need to be sent to your room or something?" Michael winked at Monica.

Adam was crushed, especially when Monica agreed.

"Yes, I do believe you should go to your room, Adam.
You have given nothing but trouble since I got here," said Monica, and she grabbed Adam's hand and marched him into his bedroom..

Adam started jumping up and down.

"What!" Monica demanded. "You have to go to the bathroom or something?"

A furious nod.

"Alright, " she said, "but I am going to trust you to go straight back into this room once you're finished because I have a guest to keep company>" With that, Monica walked back down stairs, leaving Adam alone in the bathroom---something Adam's Mom would never do. 'Too many things to get into' she would always say. Adam who had watched his Mom getting ready in the mornings foe work knew just what she meant. Today, things to get into was just what he needed. His Mom told him all about "Mr. Yuck Face" on the bad bottles in the cabinet and why he is not allowed to touch them. Most times,he wouldn't. Today, he would.

Monica had just sat down with Michael on the living room couch when, like a demon, Adam came flying around the corner just in time to steal the box of chocolates from out of Michael's lap. The next noise that Michael heard was the slam of Adam's bedroom door.

Monica was not amused.

"That little brat!" Honestly, I don't know why he's acting like this. He's usually so good. I'm sorry Michael>"

"No problem. He just wanted some chocolate, too. God knows I'd have eaten half of them by now of he hadn't stopped me."

Adam poured "Mr. Yuck" on the chocolate and made the "Mr. Yuck" face, too. He hoped Michael would match the same yucky green. Putting the lid back down stairs and into the living room.

Michael greeted him with a smile.

"It's okay, kid. Those things are good, huh?"

(continued)

Adam nodded and handed Michael the box. Then he wavedgoodnight and went to bed, a smile on his face.

Michael open the lid and looked to find the caramel oneshe liked the best. "Monica, do you have any milk?"

"Yeah, sure, I'll get you a glass." But before she headed forthe kitchen, she grabbed the last two melt-a-ways and popped them into her mouth. "MMMM...good."

RINGGGG! RINGGGGG!

Monica answered the phone, "Hello. Fisk residence?"
"Hello monica. It's Mrs. Fisk. I'm on my way home, so I'll see you in a few. So me a favor. See if I need anymilk--"

"Yes, um, uh, you will, I'm sort of drinking the last glass right now," giggling she handed the glass t Michael who was almost about to burst out laughing himself.

"Great. Thanks, Monica. Give Adam a kiss goodnight for me."

"Oh, I'll give him a kiss," Monica said looking straight at Michael. His reaction was just as she had hoped. That grin. Monica hung up the phone and grinned back.

"Michael, no time for milk. You've gotta leave before she gets here. Go out through the garden, It's safer in case she drives up the street."

Taking her hand, Michael and Monica walked out into the garden. He kissed her and gave her a bear hug to remember him by...until they go to the movie on Friday night. Then he walked off onto the Sunset Bridge and went home. Monica swooned. At first she thought she was seeing stars because of his kisses and she felt flushed because of all the excitement. Then she crumpled to the ground among the flower beds. And Adam had seen it all.

That's not what was supposed to happen! !! Michael was supposed to be the one lying on the ground, not Monica! Adam hid under his covers until his mom came home. Even when the sirens wailed, he pretended he was asleep.

I held my son's hand. What a horrible thing to happen to the poor child. Bad candy. And she was such a nice girl, too. Suddenly, Adam was tugging at my hand, trying to get free. I let him go and watched as he kneeled down among the flowers to kiss his babysitter. We all thought it was touching, especially when the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He kissed her again and again. Finally I put my hand on his shoulder and told him to stop. He whipped hid head around to face me, his eyes starring up at me were huge and glassy.

And then I heard the first words my son spoke in over five years.

"SHE'S SUPPOSED TO WAKE UP, NOW, MOMMA!" he screamed, "SHE SUPPOSED TO WAKE UP BECAUSE THE PRINCE KISSED HER!"

WORD EATER

NO. 7

Shellie Rae Smith